

# 2017 Memorial Day Services: May 27th and May 30th

**When/Where:** Saturday, May 27th, 2016 @ 10:30am – Parade Field Grounds of the Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery, 2465 Chesapeake City Road, Bear, DE 19701.

**When/Where:** Tuesday, May 30th, 2016 @ 10:30am – War Memorial Plaza, 163 Cherry Lane, New Castle, DE 19720.

The Commission of Veterans Affairs has kept the tradition of honoring all our fallen on May 30th. In the beginning, both the bridge and cemetery events were held on the same day. The bridge ceremony would begin in New Castle and everyone would follow to the Veteran Memorial Cemetery in Bear. The decision was made to have separate events, but to keep in recognition of May 30<sup>th</sup>. Please join us on this meaningful tradition in honoring those who served, but not forgotten. We appreciate all the support throughout our Delaware communities.

**History of Memorial Day** – <http://www.usmemorialday.org>:

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in service of the United States of America. Over two dozen cities and towns claim to be the birthplace of Memorial Day. While Waterloo N.Y. was officially declared the birthplace of Memorial Day by President Lyndon Johnson in May 1966, it's difficult to prove conclusively the origins of the day.

Regardless of the exact date or location of its origins, one thing is clear – Memorial Day was borne out of the Civil War and a desire to honor our dead. It was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his General Order No. 11. "The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing

with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land," he proclaimed. The date of Decoration Day, as he called it, was chosen because it wasn't the anniversary of any particular battle.

On the first Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, and 5,000 participants decorated the graves of the 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried there.

The first state to officially recognize the holiday was New York in 1873. By 1890 it was recognized by all of the northern states. The South refused to acknowledge the day, honoring their dead on separate days until after World War I (when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war).

It is now observed in almost every state on the last Monday in May with Congressional passage of the National Holiday Act of 1971 (P.L. 90 – 363). This helped ensure a three day weekend for Federal holidays, though several southern states have an additional separate day for honoring the Confederate war dead: January 19th in Texas; April 26th in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi; May 10th in South Carolina; and June 3rd (Jefferson Davis' birthday) in Louisiana and Tennessee.

**Date History** – [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial\\_Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_Day):

"On Decoration Day" Political cartoon c 1900 by John T. McCutcheon. Caption: "You bet I'm goin' to be a soldier, too, like my Uncle David, when I grow up."

The preferred name for the holiday gradually changed from "Decoration Day" to "Memorial Day," which was first used in 1882. Memorial Day did not become the more common name until after World War II, and was not declared the official name by Federal law until 1967. On June 28, 1968, Congress passed the

Uniform Monday Holiday Act, which moved four holidays, including Memorial Day, from their traditional dates to a specified Monday in order to create a convenient three-day weekend. The change moved Memorial Day from its traditional May 30 date to the last Monday in May. The law took effect at the federal level in 1971. After some initial confusion and unwillingness to comply, all 50 states adopted Congress' change of date within a few years.

Memorial Day endures as a holiday which most businesses observe because it marks the unofficial beginning of summer. The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) advocate returning to the original date, although the significance of the date is tenuous. The VFW stated in a 2002 Memorial Day Address:

*Changing the date merely to create three-day weekends has undermined the very meaning of the day. No doubt, this has contributed a lot to the general public's nonchalant observance of Memorial Day.*

Starting in 1987 Hawaii's Senator Daniel Inouye, a World War II veteran, introduced a measure to return Memorial Day to its traditional date. Inouye continued introducing the resolution until his death in 2012.